

Washington, D.C. 20503

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Honorable Dave Durenberger  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durenberger:

I received your letter yesterday with its kind words about our efforts on the Intelligence Information Act. We have worked diligently through the spring and summer to reach agreement with you and your colleagues on this bill. We have done this because we are convinced, as you are, that the bill will relieve us of a needless burden without harming the interests of the press, authors, or the public at large. I am gratified to hear you say that as a result of our efforts you will be able to support this bill. I certainly believe it merits everyone's support.

Your views regarding the need for an accurate historical record are ones that I share. If Congress is willing to provide the resources, I am prepared to institute a new program of selective declassification review of those materials that we believe would be of greatest historical interest and most likely to result in declassification of useful information.

The term "selective" is very important. There is no point in reviewing files that we basically know will contain little releasable information. And it makes no sense to review -- or even to release -- material that has become releasable only because it is trivial. Our professionals have a pretty good sense of what is likely to prove releasable; and we would be happy to work with our Historian, other agency historical offices, the Archivist of the United States, and others to determine what topics are of the greatest interest and importance. Historians would have to trust us, however, to make these professional judgments in good faith. A declassification review program could function only if we maintained control over the workload and concentrated our limited resources on the areas where they would do the most good.



One certain consequence of this selectivity would be a concentration of our efforts on the review of older, as opposed to more recent, material. Such material which documents the early years of CIA could well result in the release of information that explains the role of intelligence in the making of foreign policy. As a general rule, we are likely to limit the declassification review program to files at least 20 or 30 years old. However, these older files would certainly contain information which continues to be relevant to today's world. I am hopeful that whatever material we can release, consistent with the need to protect sources and foreign relations, will make a major contribution to historical research and interpretation.

At the moment, I do not know whether our small historical staff would be in a position to manage a selective declassification review program. But no matter where such a program would be placed organizationally within the Agency, I understand that what you are suggesting is a program provided with adequate resources. Several weeks ago, on my own initiative, I had requested the Historian of the CIA to explore a program that would result in the release of usable historical materials from the World War II period. I look forward to working with additional resources having, as you suggest, the mission of declassifying and releasing historical materials that no longer require protection.

Please allow me again to express my appreciation for your support of S. 1324. With the enactment of this important legislation and the achievement of the necessary budget support, I believe this Agency would be more than willing to undertake a new selective declassification review program. With your leadership and support, we can forge a workable means of informing the public while still protecting our nation's secrets.

Sincerely,

7s7 William J. Casey

William J. Casey  
Director of Central Intelligence